



Board Building for Iconography Summer Workshop

SYLLABUS



Term: Summer 2022

Target Grade Levels: Adults (section 1) or Grades 7-12 (section 2)

Schedule: 4x / week starting at 7 p.m. EST, plus all day Saturday (10 hours of instruction)

- Monday 7 p.m. ET for 120 minutes
- T/W/F 7 p.m. ET for 60 minutes
- Note: there is no class on Thursday evening to allow the boards to dry.
- Saturday 9 a.m.-12 p.m., plus 3 p.m.-5 p.m. Students are also expected to gesso on their own from noon-3 p.m.

Course Sections

Section 1 (Adults Only), July 11-16, 2022 (5 sessions, including Saturday)

Section 2 (Grades 7-12), August 1-6, 2022 (5 sessions, including Saturday)

Board Building in Traditional Iconography refers to not just cutting and preparing the wood, sometimes with raised borders, but also a day-long process of applying “gesso,” a mixture of rabbit-skin glue and calcium carbonate. The result is the board on which traditional egg-tempera icons are painted.

Though it takes time to make, it is really the only surface on which it is possible to both hold the many layers of paint and stand the test of time by not cracking, warping, etc. All icons throughout history as well as Renaissance Art before the popularization of oil paint, were

painted on traditionally gessoed surfaces such as this. Because of the patience and time required, an argument can also be made that board building is a valuable part of the spiritual preparation for painting, or “writing” an icon. As with applying paint in iconography, applying the gesso is a “prayer of the hands.”

Though not a required prerequisite, this class can be used to build the board for upcoming Iconography Workshops (Fall or Spring) or either of the Levels of the Iconography Apprenticeship. It is strongly recommended before **Iconography Apprenticeship Year 2**. (Note that [the cost of the hand-gessoed board](#) the student would need to purchase for Year 2 is the same or more than the price of this class.) Once the class is taken, most students will be able to build as many boards as they want on their own, without taking the workshop again.

Student Expectations

- As well as being available during the Weekday evenings (excepting Thursday, when the board needs to dry), the student must be gessoing all day on Saturday, as all the layers must be applied in one day in order to adhere to each other.
- The course materials are extensive, especially with regard to household and hardware-store type supplies. Please see the Course Materials tab and video with additional explanation.
- An adult should be paired with a school-aged student of any age to help with gathering supplies and cutting the board to size before class, or finding someone to do so. The adult should be available, though not necessarily continuously present, for problem-solving during the all-day Saturday Class.

Enrollment Restrictions

- Patience, fine motor skills, and an ability to follow directions closely are required for this class
- Though no artistic training is expected or required, experience and skill in another hands-on skill is an indicator of success in this class. Examples would include proficiency in cooking or baking, gardening, woodworking, home improvement, or ceramics. Please e-mail the instructor if you have questions about whether you or your student are ready for this class.

For more about Mrs. Sider-Rose’s process, please see www.immanuelicons.org.

Required materials

- Please also see the [video](#) for a run-through of the materials you will need. (Password for the video is “restful.”)
 - Please start gathering supplies as soon as you can.
 - Note that traditional iconography boards are “expensive” with regard to the time that it takes, not the actual cost of materials, especially if you buy in bulk. A 9×12 icon board, for example, costs only about \$5 – \$15, depending on whether the wood, etc. is bought in bulk, but takes a day of work, plus preparatory evenings.
1. **Two specialty items you will need to order following these exact links:**
 - a. **Calcium Carbonate** (“whiting”, “chalk”). Use [Kremer Pigment’s chalk from Champagne France](#). 1 kg is fine for one 9×12 board, but 10kg will set you up for several boards. Please order this before working through the rest of the list. It can take weeks to arrive, if Kremer NYC is out of stock and needs to receive it first from France.
 - b. **Finely-ground rabbit skin**
 1. [Sinopia Pigments](#) or
 2. [Blick](#) (smallest amount possible is sufficient for the purpose of this workshop but you may want at least 500g from Sinopia to prepare for the future)
 2. **Candy thermometer:** [this one](#) or any reliable candy thermometer you might have. This is important because your week of work will end as a cracked board if you overheat it at even one short stage of the process.
 3. **Old light-colored cotton sheets or linen or muslin**, the size of the icon you wish to gesso. There can be no holes in the part you want to use, but old and worn is fine. If you need to

buy this new, purchase linen or muslin (not cotton) at a place like JoAnn's Fabrics and run it through the wash with no detergent and dry before class.

4. **Utility knife** (carpet knife) for cutting off the extra cloth after dry
5. **Cheesecloth** for straining the gesso
6. **A large rubber band** for fixing the cheesecloth to the jar or coffee pot
7. **A large jar with a rim or coffee pot with rim** for straining the gesso into
8. **A double boiler or homemade equivalents**, such as a heat-proof glass or ceramic bowl placed over a pan that will have a couple of inches of water. A smaller pan set inside a larger one on a large wood-scrap block also works.
9. **Large, 3" house-painting style brush**
10. **Access to a stovetop**
11. **Scrubable table surface or painter's plastic or trash bag** to protect the surface. Dried gesso comes off with hot water, but only with some elbow grease.
12. **Rag or washable potholder** to set the hot double boiler with prepared gesso
13. **3/4" cabinet-grade ("Grade A") plywood board** to cut one of the following size options before our first class: (Note, you may make up to two 9×12 boards if you want to or one large board and one 9×12, but be aware that the more you take on, the more time you will need to put in on Saturday, possibly beyond the 5 p.m. end time.
 1. Iconography Workshop (John the Baptist in the Fall and Virgin of Tenderness in the Spring): 9×12
 2. Apprenticeship Level 1: 9×12 or larger, keeping the 3:4 proportion (12×16, etc.)
 3. Apprenticeship Level 2: 12×17 or 18×26.5. If you or the person making the cut has advanced woodworking skills, you can add an arched top if you want.
14. **A scrap of wood slightly smaller than the board you will gesso**, as the board should be slightly raised from the table
15. **Sand Paper** from a hardware store or Amazon. If you have or can borrow an electric sander for the final stage (after Saturday), that can be helpful. Otherwise, you will be wrapping sandpaper around a wood scrap or pink eraser and hand sanding.
 1. 100-grade

2. 220-grade
3. 400-grade
4. 600-grade

16. **Optional Raised Borders:** If you are up for an additional challenge and like the look of it, you may also choose to add raised borders. It will take a little more time to gesso with the raised border, so just plan on gessoing one board. You will want the measurement inside the “frame” of strips to meet the above size requirements. For example, if you are part of a class that uses a 9×12 board, and your wood strips are 1” wide, you will need the board to be 11”x14”. Adding raised borders adds the following **time commitments:**

1. It will take more time to actually gesso the board on Saturday, so plan on gessoing just one board if you would like raised borders
2. You will have a small step to complete on your Tuesday morning, outside of class

The addition of raised borders also requires the following items. Note that you need to have the following items on hand but do not need to cut or adhere the wood to the larger board until we are together in class

1. Wood strips (c. 1” on each side, though the bottom can be larger, such as 2”)
2. Wood glue (Elmer’s or any brand)
3. Wood filler (Elmer’s or any brand. Stainable)
4. Wood clamps (or a large stack of books)
5. An adult-operated electric saw or hand miter saw for cutting the wood strips during our first class. It is totally acceptable for a parent of a school-aged student to make the cuts, but these will need to be done during the Monday evening class after the student makes the marks for where to cut it.



Randi Maria Sider-Rose began painting icons over 20 years ago when she was able to travel to learn from different iconography teachers across the country. Since then, she has married Michael Sider-Rose and completed an MDiv at the University of Chicago Divinity School. As well as taking commissions from churches and individuals, Mrs. Sider-Rose loves to walk with students on the journey of learning to see better and more intentionally, using this “prayer of the hands” to grow in holiness, with God’s grace. Homeschooling her 4 children in an urban fixer-upper strewn with books, art projects, and Legos helps keep the whole operation real.

Mrs. Sider-Rose and her family attend Saint Moses the Black Orthodox Mission Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she has been blessed by His Grace Bishop Thomas to serve in the ministry of iconography.

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For more information about Mrs. Sider-Rose’s process, please visit her website at www.immanuelicons.org.